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DEVILS LAKE

WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NORTH DAKOTA

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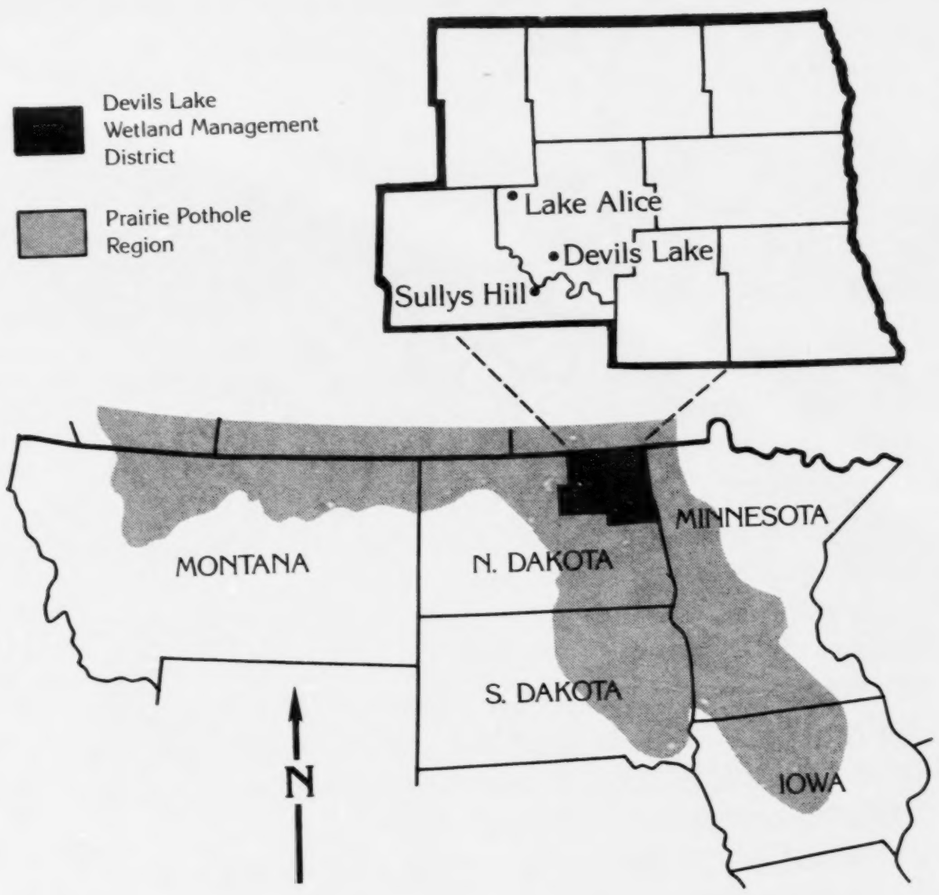
INTRODUCTION

Devils Lake Wetland Management District is located in the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region of the United States (see map below). The northeastern North Dakota counties of Towner, Cavalier, Pembina, Benson, Ramsey, Walsh, Nelson, and Grand Forks are included in the District. Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the District primarily provides wetland areas needed by waterfowl in the spring and summer for nesting and feeding. Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl also use these wetlands in the spring and fall for feeding and resting during their long migratory flights.



Primary objectives of the Devils Lake Wetland Management District are wetland habitat preservation and improvement, waterfowl and wildlife production, maintenance of migration habitat, and provision of winter cover for resident wildlife. To meet these objectives, the District manages over 41,000 acres of wetlands and other wildlife habitats located on approximately 190 separate Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA's), Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge (11,200 acres), Sullys Hill National Game Preserve (1,674 acres), ten smaller refuges, and 150,000 acres of wetland easements. WPA's are lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and are managed to establish and protect waterfowl breeding and nesting habitats. Easements on private lands protect wetlands from draining, filling, and burning.

HISTORY

Two major geological areas divide the Devils Lake Wetland Management District. The Northeastern Drift Plain, consisting of many shallow potholes or lakes scattered among rolling hills, covers the western two-thirds of the District, while an old lake bed, a remnant of glacial Lake Agassiz, covers the Red River Valley in the east.

Early Indian tribes in the region found the native grasslands and wetlands rich with wildlife. Early settlers also found abundant wildlife, but changes in land use practices and intensive agricultural development have caused depletion of countless numbers of bison, elk, and clouds of migratory birds.

Only through a commitment to protect and manage our remaining wetlands and upland habitats, can we hope to reverse the declining numbers of waterfowl and migratory birds, and ensure that self-sustaining populations of the native wildlife produced in this region remain.

WETLAND VALUES

Wetlands provide valuable habitat for many species of wildlife by providing a diversity of food, cover, water, and space. Because of their attractiveness to wildlife, wetlands provide excellent educational opportunities for thousands of students and teachers observing environmental principles and biology during outdoor studies. Hunters and trappers have long known the value of wetlands in their activities; however, a growing number of users include bird watchers, photographers, artists, and outdoor enthusiasts.

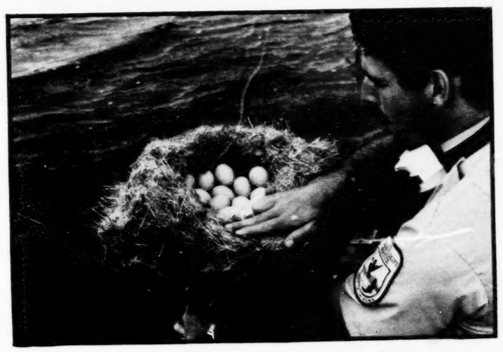
In addition, wetlands provide natural flood control by storing spring runoff and heavy summer rains. Wetlands replenish ground water supplies, remove water pollutants, filter and use nutrients, and provide an important link in the water cycle. They also provide a source of water for livestock and, in dry years, are valuable for crop and forage production.

WILDLIFE & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

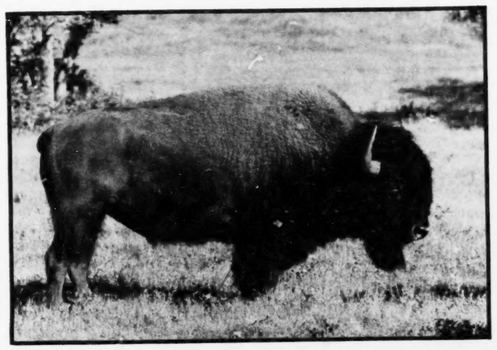
Devils Lake Wetland Management District is home for all waterfowl species found in the Prairie Pothole Region. Mallard, gadwall, and blue-winged teal are the most abundant ducks, with several other species of diving and dabbling ducks common to the area. Giant Canada geese have been reintroduced and efforts are underway to expand the range of this historically important species. Spectacular concentrations of waterfowl and other migratory birds gather in the District each spring and fall, including snow geese, whose vast numbers are a magnificent sight.

WPA's also provide habitat for many resident species of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, pheasants, turkeys, sharp-tailed grouse, Hungarian partridge, and an occasional moose. Creating habitat diversity and managing wildlife cover on WPA's result in an increase in wildlife abundance, an important objective of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Wetland Management District uses many management practices to benefit waterfowl. These management techniques include construction of nesting structures, wetland creation and restoration, management of water levels in wetlands, establishing winter food plots, managing nesting cover, prescribed burning, haying, farming, grazing, and law enforcement. These techniques also enhance and create a diversity of habitats that are used by many wildlife species.



Artificial duck nesting baskets provide safe, predator-resistant nesting sites. Photo by Roger Hollevoet



Bison bull at Sullys Hill National Game Preserve. Photo by David E. Goeke

SULLYS HILL NATIONAL GAME PRESERVE

Sullys Hill National Game Preserve is located in Benson County on the south shore of Devils Lake near the town of Devils Lake. Consisting of 1,674 acres of wooded hills and open meadows, it is one of four refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for American bison and elk.

Sullys Hill enjoys a rich natural and cultural history. Archaeologists have found evidence that suggests Sullys Hill was an important hunting and camping area for indigenous Indian tribes. The largest hill in the preserve was named for General Alfred Sully, leader of an expedition into the region in 1867. President Theodore Roosevelt set aside Sullys Hill as a National Park in 1904, and in 1917 and 1918, bison, elk, and deer were reintroduced to Sullys Hill, establishing the big game herds. Sullys Hill was transferred from the National Park Service to the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1931.

Wooded, glacial moraine hills and native grasslands are a picturesque home for bison, elk, white-tailed deer, prairie dogs, turkeys, waterfowl, and other native wildlife. Visitors can enjoy the 4-mile big game auto tour route, nature and ski trails, a picnic area, and the display waterfowl flock. The Preserve is open from 8:00 a.m. to sunset from May to October.

Snow and blue geese in flight. Photo by Roger Hollevoet

LAKE ALICE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge is located in Ramsey and Towner Counties near the town of Churchs Ferry. Long recognized as a major waterfowl concentration point during spring and fall migrations, Lake Alice supports significant numbers of nesting waterfowl. Hundreds of thousands of snow geese, Canada geese, and ducks use the lake and surrounding lands each year.

The Refuge was first established in 1935 as an easement refuge. Lands within the Refuge were privately owned, and no hunting was allowed. In 1972, the Fish and Wildlife Service purchased 8,600 acres of the original easement refuge. The Service now manages 11,200 acres at Lake Alice.

Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge is managed for waterfowl production, and for protection and improvement of wetland and wildlife habitat. The Refuge provides excellent opportunities for wildlife-oriented activities, including bird watching, hunting, photography, and the enjoyment of native wetland wildlife in its natural habitat.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Waterfowl Production Areas provide many opportunities for year-round outdoor enjoyment. Hunting and trapping are permitted within State seasons, under applicable Federal and State laws. In addition, WPA's offer excellent opportunities for wildlife observation, photography, and environmental study. Foot travel is permitted and encouraged, but please remember that motorized traffic is strictly prohibited.

Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge is open for hunting of several game species in accordance with State seasons and special Refuge regulations. Sullys Hill National Game Preserve, however, is not open for hunting or trapping.

American avocets benefit from wetlands too. Photo by USFWS

Duck's eye view of prairie potholes in North Dakota. Photo by Terry Messmer

Visitors are invited to stop in at the Wetland Management District headquarters in Devils Lake, North Dakota, for additional information regarding activities on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service land.

For further information on the Wetland Management District, Sullys Hill National Game Preserve, or Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge, please contact

Devils Lake Wetland Management
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North Dakota
58301

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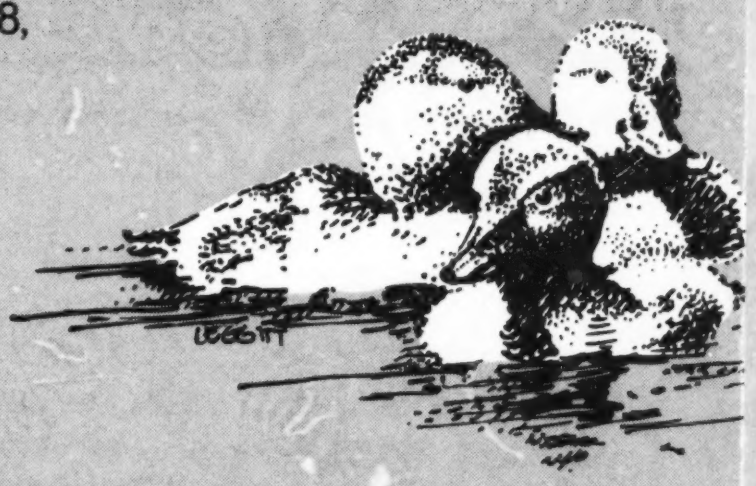

U.S. FISH and Wildlife
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